

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RECREATION AND AMENITIES COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 8 OCTOBER 2019

PRESENT

- The Mayor- Councillor Davies
- The Deputy Mayor - Councillor Jones
- Councillor Barlow
- Councillor Brady
- Councillor Garvey
- Councillor Hall
- Councillor Harper
- Councillor Hart
- Councillor Rogers
- Councillor Salt
- Councillor Sheldon
- Councillor Yates

Other Attendees:

- Councillor McLoughlin
- Councillor Adams

26.19 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence and reasons accepted were received from:

- Councillor Baddeley
- Councillor Jackson

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a) To declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests & Dispensations:
None.
- b) To declare any Other Disclosable Interests: None.

28. MINUTES

- i. The minutes of the Recreation and Amenities Committee meeting held on 10 September 2019 were **approved and signed**.
- ii. The minutes of the 93 Bus Working Group meeting held on 19 July 2019 were **received**.
- iii. The minutes of the Town Centre Highways Working group meeting held on 19 September 2019 were **received**.

Councillor Jackson queried what happens with decisions made at a Working Group. The Chief Officer responded that if a decision was taken, this would then form a recommendation to the appropriate Committee, for ratification. Councillor Jackson was concerned that a Working Group may go down a path and the Town Council could have other ideas.

There was discussion as to whether some Working Groups should be brought back within the agenda of this Committee.

Councillor Rogers cautioned that if all issues were discussed in Committees, Members would be here until midnight.

Councillor Salt noted that it was not easy to join all Working Groups when Councillors had to work; issues should be made standing agenda items.

Councillor McLoughlin noted that the Town Centre Highways Working Group had given the Chief Officer permission to approach the County Council. The response could be brought back to this Committee.

Councillor Davies felt that Working Groups with fewer people may aide discussion. Items could be time-limited at Committee meetings.

Councillor Jones proposed that the Dementia Care and Mental Health Working Group returns to the appropriate committee. This was seconded by Councillor Garvey.

The Chief Officer noted that the Town and Community Committee would need to consider the role of the Dementia Care and Mental Health Working Group.

It was agreed that the Highways Working Group actions would be an agenda item of the Recreation and Amenities Committee and the Group would be dissolved.

Councillor Yates noted that this would leave space for the Environment and Climate Change Working Group to meet; Councillor Jones seconded this.

Councillor Garvey proposed investigating the costs of the three items listed in Minute 6 of the Town Centre Highways Working Group meeting minutes, before it was dissolved.

Councillor Hart would add this as an item on the agenda for a future meeting.

29. LENGTHSMAN

a) To consider a tabled list of 'regular' Lengthsman jobs as part of the contract review (requested at the September meeting)

The Chief Officer gave a brief history of the lengthsman scheme and listed the work done in the past twelve months. There was a budget of £8000. There had been no complaints and the Lengthsman was responsive and proactive. The Chief Officer would recommend that the contract is extended for a further year. The role would go out to tender in Summer 2020; there would be more information about the possible increase in grass cutting in the town by then.

Councillor Salt questioned the payments made to the Lengthsman for work carried out for Biddulph in Bloom; she added that it was important that the public see the support given by this Council to Biddulph in Bloom.

Councillor Sheldon responded that some of the work was carried out for safety reasons and Biddulph in Bloom also paid for some work from its own budget.

Councillor Jones was puzzled by Councillor Salt's queries about the Lengthsman work with Biddulph in Bloom. The Chief Officer wondered if the wording was not clear, noting that the Lengthsman was responsive in doing 'normal' jobs to coincide with judging day and understood the timing.

Councillor Salt responded that she was not 'dissing' the work of Biddulph in Bloom, but this had raised questions.

It was agreed to extend the contract to September 2020.

b) Standing agenda item - New jobs for the Lengthsman

Councillor Yates requested work on Footpath 23 part of which connects Washington Close with Gillow Heath and the town.

Councillor Harper noted that the path between St Johns Road and Park Lane was overgrown; Councillor Salt noted that this path was maintained by SMDC.

Councillor Jackson noted that the footpaths between St Johns Road and Slater Street and between Duke Street and Moorland Road were overgrown.

Councillor Rogers noted that the bridge on Footpath 23 was in poor condition; he thought it might need resurfacing.

Councillor Yates noted that Mark Preece was investigating this; it had a recently applied surface with an anti-slip standard, he recommended no further work to be done. Councillor Yates would monitor the situation.

30. TO DISCUSS ISSUES TO RAISE AT THE ALLOTMENTS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Chief Officer noted that an AGM open to all ploholders had been provisionally arranged for 6.00pm on Thursday 7 November 2019.

Councillor Salt asked for an agenda item - disabled access and support.

Councillor Jackson asked about the potential for the Shepherd Street/Slater Street site and asked if there was still a demand for plots.

Councillor Yates asked if the sites were advertised and if the waiting list was a true reflection of the need. The Chief Officer noted that all the information was on the Biddulph website, but plots were not actively promoted currently.

Councillor Rogers was concerned about advertising when there were no plots available as this would give people false hope.

31. AN UPDATE ON STATION ROAD FLOODING- COUNCILLOR YATES

Councillor Yates gave a brief recap of his involvement with flooding at properties in Station Road. The incident had occurred quickly and at night, the volume of water and amount of detritus had blocked the arch of the bridge, it was difficult to apportion blame. Four houses were uninhabitable and one business had incurred a large amount of costs; several properties downstream had received damage.

Councillor Yates had met with members of the Environment Agency on 3 September and walked the brook; some guidance had been given at the time, one business had dug out a small diversion which was helping. Councillor Yates noted several sites which could be better managed and asked the Chief Officer a personal question about a site.

The Chief Officer left the room. Councillor Yates noted that a culvert on the west side of the Biddulph Valley needed clearing; he would try to contact the landowner.

The Chief Officer returned to the meeting.

Councillor Yates listed suggestions which had been made by the Environment Agency representatives. Dorset Drive, for example, could accommodate 'leaking dams'; natural barriers above the normal water level, using trees on the site; this would be quite a serious intervention, but was effective.

Councillor Hart suggested that the Environment Agency should be given the contact details of the Chief Officer for further discussions.

Councillor Yates responded that representatives from the Environment Agency would be visiting the town again on 14 October 2019, further discussions could take place when more information was available.

Councillor McLoughlin felt that the problem was exacerbated after the bridge; the brook was narrowed by fallen debris.

Councillor Hart felt it was important to understand who was responsible for each stream and watercourse. Councillor Hart suggested bringing this as an agenda item to the next meeting.

Councillor Salt felt that members should be careful about the language used, as Councillor Yates had not made his final point.

Councillor Yates noted that the Environment Agency was the statutory authority and could carry out the work needed; he highlighted problems where people had 'garden grabbed' noting that this issue was difficult to address.

Councillor Hart suggested that the Environment Agency representatives should come in and talk to the Chief Officer, so that information could be disseminated in order to make appropriate decisions.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm.

Signed Date